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tions of the second empire, that the committee to which these plans were submitted was called the *commission de décentralisation*. At the same time, however, the men who guided the reform were quite conservative in spirit. The result, therefore, was simply farther progress in the way marked out by the second empire in the law of 1866. The only important departure from that general plan was the formation of the departmental commission—a permanent representative of the general council—which was to exercise a local control over the agent of the central government in the department, *viz.* the prefect. The whole progress of this movement and the details of the various reform plans are given by Dr. Dethan with just sufficient detail to keep this part of the work interesting to the general reader while making it profitable as well to the student. The latter part of the work, though not so interesting, on account of the greater detail which the conditions of the task have made necessary, is still most valuable to any one desiring to know all that is to be known about the general councils. But nothing beyond the information in regard to their organization must be expected.

F. J. G.

Des Hautes Cours Politiques en France et à l'étranger. Par ADOLPHE-ÉMILE LAIR. Paris, Ernest Thorin, 1889. — xxiv, 436 pp.

There are in France so many political parties with radically different views as to the kind of government best for the country—parties which feel little hesitation in attempting to make the changes they regard as advisable—that the question of the best method of punishing what are called *attentats contre la sûreté de l'Etat* is a serious one. The question is one which every government existing during this century has had to consider. The turbulent character of the people at the time of the French revolution made it seem advisable to form a special tribunal for the punishment of all such attempts. Each of the governments which have succeeded one another with such rapidity since 1789 has endeavored to solve this problem in its own way, and most of the solutions arrived at have agreed in this one particular, that the political crime of attempting to overthrow the existing government should be excluded from the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts. How the special court which this way of solving the question made necessary should be formed, seemed so important a question to the Paris faculty of law, that they provided in 1884 that the subject of the Rossi prize should be *Des Hautes Cours Politiques dans les temps modernes*. M. Adolphe-Émile Lair, formerly a justice of the court of appeal at Angers, was the successful competitor for the prize, his dissertation being crowned by the faculty of law. This dissertation is the basis of the book before us.

M. Lair has profited by the criticisms and suggestions made at the time the prize was awarded to him and has also enlarged considerably the compass of his original dissertation, treating in his book of the *hautes cours politiques* not only in modern but also in earlier times so far as to include a description of the institutions of ancient Rome and of Europe in the middle ages. His discussion of the courts in France for the trial of treason and similar political offences is from both the historical and the legal point of view remarkably thorough—so thorough as to become, in the case of the revolutionary governments between 1789 and 1815, somewhat tedious to the foreign reader. What is of particular interest, however, is the admirable work which has been done in bringing together the institutions of all important modern countries. Here again the author has been lured by an overweening desire for thoroughness into the pit into which so many students of comparative institutions fall. It is doubtful whether the institutions of the Orange Free State or of Iceland offer an example which can be copied with advantage by any of the great states of the present day. In this portion of the work the author seems to have relied more than is advisable upon secondary sources of information,—a failing which can be excused only by the well-known lack in France of the original materials for the study of foreign institutions. One result is incompleteness of treatment in many instances; for example, in the portion of the work devoted to the law of the United States. Almost all the author seems to know of our method of trying treason or of impeaching officers is derived from a study of the constitution and from the reading of one or two French histories of this country. His knowledge of our various state trials is scanty; the only one he alludes to is the impeachment of General Belknap, such an important trial as that of President Johnson not even being mentioned.

The general principles, however, which M. Lair derives from his work on the institutions of foreign countries are valuable. He finds that in the organization of the tribunal for the trial of political crimes three systems have been adopted. In the first the jurisdiction belongs to the legislature; in the second, to the highest ordinary court in the land; in the third, to a special court constituted to assume it. In a few states, finally, a mixed system is found. From the point of view of the punishment which is meted out, two classes may be distinguished, according as conviction is followed simply by removal from and future disqualification for office, or by some further criminal penalty. The author is convinced, it would seem, from the special study which he has made of this subject, that the formation of a special court is necessary largely because of the inability of the ordinary courts, in times of great political excitement, to suppress political conspiracies and to

convict offenders in high station. But at the same time that he demands the formation of a special court for the trial of political offences, he insists that the court shall be so formed as to be as far as possible free from political influences, and that its jurisdiction shall be exactly defined by law, so as to leave little or no discretion in applying the penalties.

While M. Lair devotes the larger part of his work to the discussion of the punishment of political crimes, he treats also of the impeachment of state officers for misdemeanors other than political, *i.e.* of the final control which the legislature may exercise over the executive. The attempt to treat two somewhat different subjects at the same time is often confusing. Thus the author's criticism of the system in vogue in the United States is really unfounded, because our method of impeachment is designed to give the legislature a control over the executive rather than to provide a means for the punishment of political crimes. Political crimes are included in the ordinary criminal law, and are punished by the ordinary courts, with the single exception of those committed by officers of state. This fact seems to be overlooked by M. Lair. Like so many French books, this volume is not provided with any index, and is on that account less acceptable as a book of reference.

F. J. G.

Twelve English Statesmen: William the Conqueror. By EDWARD A. FREEMAN. 200 pp. — *Henry the Second.* By MRS. J. R. GREEN. 224 pp. — *Henry the Seventh.* By JAMES GAIRDNER. 219 pp. London and New York, Macmillan & Co., 1888-1889.

We are living in an age of series. History, art, science, literature and religion are set before the public in an endless array of monograph-groups. Whatever the disadvantages of the fashion, it has a distinct æsthetic significance. The dainty series is to the ponderous fourteen volume history as a French cook's masterpiece to a Virginia barbecue. There may be more nourishment in the latter, but an appreciation of the former denotes the more refined palate.

Judged by the three volumes before us, *Twelve English Statesmen* is destined to rank with the best of recent series. Each monograph is a triumph of biographical art, won without sacrifice of scientific value. In each case are displayed the characteristics of the man that entitle him to the rank of a statesman, without disregarding the characteristics of the times which made the statesman possible. That each of the authors is an expert on the history of the period to which his subject belongs is important; but this alone will not account for the excellence of the little